

ST JAMES'S CHURCH TAUNTON

SATURDAY 23 MARCH 2019

2.00PM

ORGAN RECITAL

MARTIN ELLIS

*Former Assistant Director of Music and Chapel Organist
Taunton School 1973 – 1986*

<i>From Douze Pièces 1886: Toccata in G</i>	Theodore Dubois 1837 – 1924
<i>Méditation post</i>	Maurice Duruflé 1902 – 1986
<i>Pièce d'orgue(Fantasia in G) S.572</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach 1685 – 1750
<i>Suite Carmelite 1938</i>	Jean Françaix 1912 - 1997
<i>Soeur Blanche Mère Marie de l'incarnation</i>	
<i>Soeur Anne de la Croix Soeur Constance</i>	
<i>Soeur Mathilde Mère Marie de Saint Augustin</i>	
<i>Interval</i>	
<i>Andantino in G minor 1857</i>	Cèsar Franck 1822 – 1890
<i>From Six Pieces 1842: Choral Song and Fugue</i>	Samuel Sebastian Wesley 1810 – 1876
<i>Allegretto in E flat Op.17/2 1900</i>	William Wolstenholme 1865 - 1931
<i>Recessional 1986</i>	William Mathias 1934 – 1992

BIOGRAPHY

Martin Ellis began his musical career in the Temple Church Choir at the age of 12. He held the RCO R J Pitcher Scholarship at the Royal College of Music where he studied with Sir George Thalben – Ball and Sir John Dykes Bower. After graduating he taught in a number of independent preparatory and secondary schools including Taunton School and Reigate Grammar School where he was Director of Music for thirteen years. In 1986 he was appointed Director of Music and Organist at St Martin's Church Dorking from where he retired in 2014 after twenty eight years. From 2000 until 2013 he served on the visiting music staff at Epsom College where he was Chapel Organist. Now living in Suffolk, Martin was President of the Suffolk Organists Association for the year 2017/ 2018 and is President Elect for 2019/2020.

Turn over to read the Programme Notes

PROGRAMME NOTES -© MARTIN ELLIS

This programme is designed to show off the variety of 'colours' that this 1861 *William Hill* organ affords. Not only that; the reader will see that it contains music from across the centuries including one of the *Six Pieces* that **Samuel Sebastian Wesley** wrote whilst organist of Exeter Cathedral for a pupil in 1842: just nineteen years before this organ was built. The majestic *Choral Song* in rondo form is followed by a *Fugue*, the subject of which is adapted from a movement of **John Travers'** anthem *Ascribe unto the Lord – Tell it out among the heathen*. At the end of the *Fugue* prior to a coda, there is an exciting pedal cadenza under a long sustained chord. The recital opens with a well-known *Toccata* by **Theodore Dubois**. Dubois rose to the position of director of the Paris Conservatoire and succeeded **Camille Saint Saens** as organist of the Madeleine. There is much discussion surrounding *Pièce d'Orgue (Fantasia in G major) BWV 572* by **Bach**. This exercise in the French style was created before 1717. In this period, Bach copied the *Livre d'Orgue* from 1700 by the French organist and composer Nicolas de Grigny, wishing to master the French style. The way in which he proceeded to put his own stamp on this style in the *Pièce d'Orgue* is outstanding. Completely in line with the style, the three movements are named successively *Très vivement*, *Gravement* and *Lentement*, but they merely give the piece the appearance of being in three parts. Neither are they all quite as French as we might expect. In fact, the piece revolves around the a massive central movement, which is intended to be played with all the stops pulled out (*Grand Plein Jeu*), as was customary in similar pieces by French organists. It is preceded by a short *toccata* – like prelude and followed by *toccata* – like coda. Together, the three movements could equally well be construed as a free fantasia, and one of the versions of the piece has survived under this title. Yet there remains a discussion surrounding the coda. The *Pièce d'Orgue* is unique in Bach's compositions for the organ. Although it may be an exercise in the French style, it could well have connections with the keyboard competition to be held in Dresden in the autumn of 1717, in which Bach was to pit his strength against the French virtuoso **Louis Marchand**, who was travelling through Germany at the time. The competition never took place, however, as the Frenchman is said to have heard Bach preparing for it and taken to his heels in a hurry. So Bach went on to give a solo performance to a perplexed audience. There are no details about what he performed, but Bach's obituary refers to an improvisation duel, naming a drawing room as the location. It stands to reason that the first performance of this piece was on a pedal Harpsichord as was the *Passacaglia* and *Fugue in C minor*. **Jean Françaix** pursued a career in ballet, opera and film scores. His compositions are on the light side. *Suite Carmelite* portrays the character of six Carmelite nuns. However, there appears to be a connection between this composition and the deeply moving opera by **Frances Poulenc's** *Dialogues de Carmelites* set in the time of the French Revolution. **Matthias** was Professor of Music at Bangor University and died at a comparatively young age. His Organ Music is outstanding and his harmonic style is a mix of Bartok, Bitonalism and the Atonal – *Recessional* in no exception to the rule. *Recessional* is dedicated to **Christopher Morris**, himself a composer. The reflective pieces in the programme display the charm of **Maurice Duruflé** in a piece which is transcribed from a Mass. Duruflé only wrote fourteen opus numbers. The *Andantino in G minor* by **César Franck** is one of his early compositions with an accompaniment which is reminiscent of the style of Lefébure-Wely coupled with Franck's melodic genius of later years. When **Wolstenholme** was organist of the fashionable Church of All Saints, Norfolk Square in London's West End, he was frequently asked compose lighter music for soirees in the grand houses. This **Allegretto** was originally scored for Viola and Piano. Wolstenholme was blind and **Elgar** was his amanuensis for his Oxford BMus.degree.